

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 TEL AVIV 6847

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SOPN, XF
SUBJECT: DEPARTMENT'S PRESS STATEMENT ON PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION
IN GENEVA CONFERENCE

REF: STATE 217579

1. SUMMARY: DAYAN CALLED ME TO HIS HOUSE THIS AFTER-
NOON TO DELIVER LONG AND VEHEMENT PROTEST OVER DEPART-
MENT SPOKESMAN'S STATEMENT ON PALESTINIAN PARTICIPATION
IN GENEVA CONFERENCE (REFTEL). HIS (AND BEGIN'S)
UNHAPPINESS WITH CONTENT WAS HEIGHTENED BY HANDLING
(CALLING DINITZ IN ON SUNDAY, TIMING RELEASE FOR EVE OF
ROSH HASHANAH) AND WHAT DAYAN CHARACTERIZED AS "TAKE IT
OR LEAVE IT" BASIS ON WHICH THEY WERE INFORMED. FON OFF
WILL PUT OUT, AFTER DEPARTMENT STATEMENT ISSUED, A
STRONG STATEMENT OF ITS OWN REAFFIRMING THAT GOI WILL
NEVER DEAL WITH PLO "MURDERERS," CONTENTS LARGELY
DICTATED BY BEGIN. DAYAN, FOR GOI, AGAIN DEPLORED USG
APPARENT DESIRE TO AIR DIFFERENCES IN PUBLIC AND SHARPEN
DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND U.S. DAYAN CONCEDED
MY DETAILED ARGUMENT THAT STATEMENT SIMPLY REITERATES
PREVIOUS USG POSITION FREQUENTLY PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED
WITH THEM, AND THAT WORD "PALESTINAIN" DOES NOT
NECESSARILY MEAN PLO; BUT PROFESSED GREAT BAFFLEMENT

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AS TO WHY PRESS QUERIES REQUIRED STATEMENT AT THIS
TIME, AND ON EVE OF HIS WASHINGTON TRIP WHEN WHOLE
RANGE OF PROBLEMS INVOLVED IN MOUNTING GENEVA CONFERENCE
WOULD BE DISCUSSED. END SUMMARY.

2. DAYAN CALLED ME TO HIS HOUSE THIS AFTERNOON AND,
EVEN THOUGH ROSH HASHANAH WAS ABOUT TO BEGIN, SPENT AN

HOUR AND A HALF PROTESTING BOTH THE CONTENT AND THE HANDLING OF THE DEPARTMENT'S PROPOSED STATEMENT. ALTHOUGH PERSONALLY FRIENDLY, HE WAS OBVIOUSLY PRETTY UPSET. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HIS REMARKS REFLECTED THE VIEWS OF BEGIN, WHO WAS CONSIDERABLY EXERCISED AND PERSONALLY DRAFTED THE PROPOSED FOREIGN OFFICE REJOINDER, TO BE ISSUED AFTER THE DEPARTMENT STATEMENTS IS MADE PUBLIC. REJOINDER WILL NOTE THAT SUCCESSIVE GOI GOVERNMENTS HAVE TAKEN POSITION THEY WILL ACCEPT PALESTINIANS (NOT PLO MEMBERS) WITHIN A JORDANIAN DELEGATION BUT WILL NEVER NEGOTIATE WITH REPRESENTATIVES FO THE "PLO MURDERERS" WHOSE AIM IS THE ANNIHILATION OF ISRAEL." STATEMENT WILL ALSO RECALL THE EXPLICIT USG-GOI AGREEMENT THAT ANY CHANGE IN THE ORIGINAL GENEVA PARTICIPANTS MUST BE ACCEPTED BY ALL PARTIES.

3. DAYAN FOUND "UNPRODUCTIVE AND ALMOST INSULTING," THE WAY THIS WAS HANDLED. THE QUESTION OF A PALESTINIAN ROLE IN PEACE NEGOTIATIONS, HE CLAIMED, IS THE ONE GOI WOULD MOST EXPECT THE U.S. TO CONSULT CLOSELY ON. INSTEAD, DINITZ HAD BEEN CALLED IN SUDDENLY ON A SUNDAY AFTERNOON AND PRESENTED THE STATEMENT AS COMING FROM "A HIGH BUT UNNAMEABLE SOURCE" AND NOT OPEN TO CHANGE OR NEGOTIATION. HE CONTRASTED THIS TO THE CONSULTATIONS AND CHANGES THAT TOOK PLACE ON THE DEPARTMENT'S STATEMENT ON SETTLEMENTS. GOI WILL SIMPLY
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NEVER ACCEPT THE PLO AT GENEVA, WHETHER THEY ACCEPT 242 OR NOT.

4. I INTERJECTED STRONGLY TO POINT OUT THAT THIS STATEMENT CONCERNED OUR EXPLORATION OF POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION, POSSIBLY INCLUDING BUT CERTAINLY NOT LIMITED TO THE PLO AS ONE VARIANT, AND REMINDED HIM THAT THE SUBJECT HAD BEEN DISCUSSED AT LENGTH BOTH BETWEEN PRESIDENT CARTER AND PRIME MINISTER BEGIN, AND BETWEEN SECRETARY VANCE AND THE ISRAELIS HERE. WHILE I DID NOT KNOW ALL THE BACKGROUND, IT WAS OBVIOUSLY FELT THAT THE INTENSE PUBLIC AND PRESS INTEREST REQUIRED A REITERATION OF THE AMERICAN POSITION; AND THAT THIS IN NO WAY PUT IN QUESTION OUR COMMITMENTS TO THE ISRAELIS REGARDING PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA. DINITZ HAD, IN FACT, BEEN SHOWN THE TEXT EXPRESSLY TO INVITE THE COMMENT OF HIS GOVERNMENT, WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT HAD DINITZ BEEN INSTRUCTED TO PURSUE THE SUBJECT FURTHER THIS MORNING. I SAID I FRANKLY COULD NOT SEE THE SIGNIFICANCE DAYAN AND BEGIN WERE ATTACHING TO THE STATEMENT.

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5. DAYAN BACKED DOWN A BIT AND FINALLY CONCEDED SOME VALIDITY TO THESE POINTS. HE QUESTIONED, BUT FINALLY ACCEPTED THE POINT THAT "PALESTINAIN" NEITHER PRECLUDED NOR WAS IDENTICAL WITH "PLO," BUT SAID EVEN THAT MUCH CONTEMPLATION OF A PLO ROLE MADE HIM UNHAPPY. HE ARGUED FURTHER THAT THE REFERENCE TO 242 IN THE LAST PARAGRAPH OF DEPARTMENT STATEMENT IMPLICITLY MADE THE PLO THE SUBJECT, SINCE OBVIOUSLY ISRAEL, JORDAN, EGYPT, AND SYRIA HAVE ALL ACCEPTED 242. HE COULD NOT RECALL ANY DISCUSSION BETWEEN USG AND GOI OF PLO AS EVEN A POSSIBLE PARTICIPANT TILL I REMINDED HIM OF ALTERNATIVES SECRETARY HAD PRESENTED HERE. WE WENT ON TO RAISE SUBSIDIARY QUESTIONS--E.G., WHY THE SAUDIS WERE MENTIONED IN A WAY THAT SEEMED TO MAKE THEM OFFICIAL PARTIES IN THE GENEVA CONFERENCE PROCESS. I POINTED OUT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SAUDIS IN GETTING ARAB AGREEMENT TO ANY FORMULA OTHER THAN A STREIGHT PLO REPRESENTATION. FINALLY, HE DWELT AT LENGTH ON THE UNDESIRABILITY OF THE USG AND GOI AIRING THEIR DIFFERENCES IN PUBLIC WHICH, HE ARGUED, OBLIGES EACH SIDE TO CONTINUE REITERATING ITS POSITION, THUS MAKING BOTH SIDES MORE RIGID AND REDUCING THE POSSIBILITY OF NEGOTIATING FLEXIBILITY. HE REGRETTED THE IMPORTANCE GIVEN THIS STATEMENT AS A DEPARTMENT PRONOUNCEMENT. HE INSISTED THAT HE MAKES ALMOST NO OFFICIAL STATEMENTS AS FOREIGN MINISTER AND CONFIDENTIAL

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NOTED WRYLY THAT STATEMENTS BY SHARON HARDLY CARRY THE IMPORTANCE OF STATEMENTS BY PRESIDENT CARTER OR AN OFFICIAL STATEMENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE. HE CONCEDED FINALLY THAT THE STATEMENT SAID NOTHING NEW BUT REGRETTED THE NEED FOR ANOTHER ROUND OF DISAGREEMENT. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH BETTER, HE FELT, TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE QUIETLY WHEN HE REACHED WASHINGTON. I ENDED MY REMARKS BY AGAIN STRESSING THAT BOTH THE CONTENT AND THE HANDLING OF THE STATEMENT SEEMED TO ME UNEXCEPTIONABLE AND I THOUGHT THE GOI WAS DEFINITELY OVER-REACTING. OUR SPOKESMAN WOULD AFFIRM IF ASKED THAT WE HAVE NOT CHANGED OUR POSITION ON THE PLO, AND THAT PARTICIPATION AT GENEVA REMAINED SUBJECT TO THE AGREEMENT OF ALL ORIGINAL PARTIES, INCLUDING ISRAEL.

6. COMMENT: THIS EXCHANGE, AND THE QUITE STRONG REACTION OF BEGIN AND DAYAN, IS JUST ANOTHER INDICATION OF THEIR ACUTE SENSITIVITY TO WHAT THEY FEEL AS AMERICAN PRESSURE AND, PARTICULARLY, AMERICAN WILLINGNESS TO PUBLICIZE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN OUR TWO GOVERNMENTS. DAYAN OBVIOUSLY FEELS THAT WE ARE ENCOURAGING ARAB INFLEXIBILITY AND MAKING THE ISRAELI BARGAINING POSITION MORE DIFFICULT BY THESE TACTICS. HE SEEMS GENUINELY PERPLEXED AS TO WHY WE ARE NOT MORE WILLING TO CONFINE OUR DISAGREEMENTS TO PRIVATE EXCHANGES, EXPECIALLY JUST PRIOR TO WHAT HE (AND WE) SEE AS A CRITICAL SERIES OF TALKS IN WASHINGTON.

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